

Rāmalalā Nahachū

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration,
English Exposition with detailed Notes)

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Presented In English By:-

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

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Preface

This short composition of Goswami Tulsidas is believed to have been written by him in A.D. 1571-1572, corresponding to the Hindu era of Vikram Samvat, 1628-1629.

The book consists of merely of twenty 2-line verses and it narrates a ritual known as 'Nahachu' wherein the groom's hairs and nails are trimmed just before his marriage. Hence, this book describes the occasion when Lord Ram's hair and nails were cut before he went to the venue of the marriage ceremony where he was to be married to Sita.

Ordinarily this ritual is done at the groom's home before the marriage party departs for the bride's place. But in the case of Lord Ram it so happened that he and the rest of the marriage party were lodged at Janakpur, the hometown of Sita, the bride at the time of the 'Nahachu' ritual instead of Ram's hometown of Ayodhya. How and why this happened is well documented in all the versions of the famous epic known as Ramayana which describes the life and time of Lord Ram.

The Lord and his younger brother Laxman were sent by their father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, to protect the fire sacrifice of the great sage Vishwamitra from being defiled by demons. After finishing off this great task the Lord had accompanied the sage to Janakpur to witness the great bow-breaking event.

The king of Janakpur had a daughter named Sita, and he had declared that anyone who would lift and string the mighty bow given to him on some earlier occasion by Lord Shiva would be able to marry his daughter Sita. All the great kings and princes of the time had arrived to participate in the competition. As was destined, none could even shift the bow an inch, let alone lifting and stringing it. On the instructions of sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram lifted the bow very easily, and as he bent it to string it, the creaky bow broke into two halves with a thunderous roar. Thus it was decided that Sita would be married to Lord Ram.

A messenger was sent to Ayodhya to bring Ram's father along with the official marriage party so that the marriage could be solemnized formally with great celebrations and fanfare. When the party arrived it was lodged at Janakpur. Lord Ram and his younger

brother Laxman joined their father here. So when the time for performing the formal marriage rituals came, the groom, Lord Ram, took a bath and underwent this 'Nahachu' ritual before departure from his place of lodging to the venue of the marriage ceremony in the center of the city of Janakpur.

This is the reason why the 'Nahachu' ritual was performed at Janakpur, the bride's hometown, instead of at Ayodhya, the groom's place.

Regarding the background event that led Tulsidas to write this short composition, it is believed that once he had gone to attend a marriage function at Ayodhya. At some point of time during the ceremony he found some lady singers singing vulgar songs. This greatly pained and annoyed his heart because he had not expected such songs to be sung at Ayodhya which was supposed to be a holy place that should be reverberating with the holy name of Lord Ram and soaked in devotion for the Lord. Tulsidas could not digest that the residents of such a highly respected place as Ayodhya will use such vulgar lyrics during marriage ceremonies which in themselves are deemed to be religious affairs.

So he got up to leave. Since he was a highly respected person of his time, the people felt very bad and sad, and fell at his feet to forgive them. Tulsidas scolded them for their foolishness at wasting the energy of their tongue in uttering nonsense. When they requested him to compose some verses befitting the occasion, verses that they would sing henceforth on all marriage occasions, it is said that Tulsidas created this short composition known as 'Ram Lala Nahachu'. Its lyrics and music matched the ones of the earlier vulgar song, but now they had a divine aura about them, instead of the earlier vulgarity, as they contained the holy name of Lord Ram and related to the same rite that was performed when Lord Ram was preparing for his own marriage.

The lady singer immediately adopted these verses and sang them with renewed vigour and fervour. The whole atmosphere transformed into a holy event, and the people felt exhilarated and blessed. The professional singer memorized these verses, and she sang them henceforth during all marriage ceremonies. By and by, this had a profound effect on her as she became calmer, more contented, and a great devotee of Lord Ram which gave her soul peace and tranquility.

Since that time it became a standard practice that when the groom was being prepared for the marriage rituals, such as his taking a formal ritualistic bath, shaving his beard and trimming his nails or getting a hair cut, the verses of 'Ram Lala Nahachu' were recited by the ladies of the household to bless the groom and pray for his well-being and happiness.

Such is the positive effect of the presence of great saints that it transforms the lives of all those who are fortunate to have such great souls in their midst. Tulsidas converted an environment charged with passion and vulgarity into one that was holy, divine and religious, an atmosphere that provided internal peace and happiness to all those present instead of arousing passions and lasciviousness in them.

This short book fills the gap left by Janki Mangal and Ram Charit Manas where an extensive narration of the events related to Lord Ram's marriage are included, because neither of them touches on this short ritual of 'Nahachu'—which means 'cutting of the hair on the head, the shaving of the beard, and the trimming of the nails' before the groom takes a bath and prepares himself to participate in the marriage rituals.

In fact, this short book of Tulsidas derives its name 'Ram Lala Nahachu' from this ritual. The word 'Lala' is an affectionate term used to refer to 'a dear son'. Hence, the title of the book means 'the hair-cutting and nail-trimming ceremony of dear son Ram prior to his marriage'.

The style of composition of this book is known as 'Sohar Chanda'. The word 'Sohar' means a 'nuptial song', and therefore a Sohar Chanda is always recited during a marriage ceremony. It is special type of 4-line verse which has 20 Mastras in all. Each of its lines ends with the exclamatory word 'Ho'. This word 'Ho' creates a beat, a rhythm, when the verses are sung in a group. Usually the main singer recites the rest of the line, and when he reaches at the end of a particular line to say 'Ho', the whole congregation joins him in a loud chorus of 'Ho'.

During the ritual of the 'Nahachu', the nails and hairs of Lord Ram were cut and trimmed. After this ceremony, the groom takes a bath to clean himself, and then he wears new clean clothes. This has a great symbolic meaning—that is, when a person remembers Lord Ram and sings the divine verses dedicated to the Lord, all his sins and their negative effects on his spiritual well-being are trimmed and cut-off. His earlier unclean self is washed of all the dirt and filth that had been sticking onto him over so many births in the past as well as during the time that has passed in the current life also. His inner self that was feeling restless and tormented by so many problems of mundane life that it had to face daily, now begins to find peace and happiness when the person starts singing the divine story of Lord Ram or even some incident related to the Lord's life, such as this ceremony of 'Nahachu'.

The significance of this ceremony is too obvious to be missed. Just like the physical cleaning of the groom before his marriage and his living a new life with his beloved wife, these verses help the devotee to clean himself of all worldly impurities and prepare to lead a new life in the company of his beloved Lord, Sri Ram.

The present Book "Ram Lala Nahachu" is a short composition consisting of only twenty verses, so I have added two verses describing Lord Ram's 'Aarti' from one of Tulsidas' other wonderful books known as "Vinai Patrika", which is a beautiful 'Book of Devotional Hymns and Prayers'. The 'Aarti' is a traditional form of worship ritual wherein lighted lamps are waved in front of the deity to be worshipped, which in our case is Lord Ram. It is done to honour the Lord and pay one's respect and obeisance to him. These two verses of the Aarti would compliment this present narration of the 'Nahachu' ceremony inasmuch as this rite is an obligatory part of the ceremony wherein the groom is welcomed by the bride's family by doing his Aarti. Repeated references of the Aarti have been made while describing the story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita in Tulsidas'

epic “Ram Charit Manas” as well as in “Janki Mangal” which is a book especially dedicated to this theme. The story as narrated in them has been published by this author as independent books.

I hope my esteemed readers will enjoy this work of Goswami Tulsidas. I have tried my best to keep the English simple and straightforward, and have added short notes and comments wherever I thought fit that they would help to explain the text better and enhance its beauty.

I must also express my thanks to Sri Somil Bharti, B.Tech (IIT, Kanpur) and MBA (IIM, Calcutta) who has done the Roman Transliteration of the original Hindi Text of the book ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’ for me.

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तुलसीकृत— राम लला नहछू

Tulasīdās-kr̥ta: Rāmalalā Nahachū

श्री सतगुरु सिय—पीय चरन चित लावउँ ।

भरत लखन रिपुदवन पवनसुत ध्यावउँ ॥

श्रीतुलसी पद कमल सप्रेम मनावउँ ।

रामलला नहछू जेहि तिलक बनावउँ ॥

Invocation

śrī satagurū siya-pīya carana cita lāva'um̐.

bharata lakhana ripudavana pavanasuta dhyāva'um̐..

śrītulasī pada kamala saprēma manāva'um̐.

rāmalalā nahachū jēhi tilaka banāva'um̐..

I hereby invoke and remember the holy feet of the righteous Guru (moral preceptor) as well as of the dear husband of Sita (i.e. of Lord Ram).

I meditate upon Bharat, Laxman, Shatrughan (known as 'Ripudavan') and Hanuman (known as 'Pavan-sut' as he is the son of the Wind God).

Tulsidas says that I invoke the blessings of the holy feet of all of them as I am about to start writing the verses of ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’.

[Note—It is a tradition amongst all poets and bards of India to begin any text with first paying their obeisance to the deity they worship as well as their Guru, their teacher. In the case of Goswami Tulsidas, the deity is Lord Ram. Since the Guru occupies a position senior to the deity, Tulsidas has first paid his obeisance to the Guru and then to Lord Ram. Again, since this book is dedicated to ‘Ram as a groom who was the beloved of Sita’, Tulsidas uses the phrase ‘Siya-Piya’ meaning the beloved one of Sita.

He then goes on to pay his respects to all the other brothers of Lord Ram, viz. Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, and then to Hanuman as the latter is deemed to be the most enlightened amongst the Lord’s devotees and also the one who is dearest to the Lord.]

Rāmalalā Nahachū—The Text

आदि सारदा गनपति गौरि मनाइय हो ।

रामलला कर नहछू गाइ सुनाइय हो ॥

जेहि गायें सिधि होय परमनिधि पाइय हो ।

कोटि जनम कर पातक दूरि सो जाइय हो ॥१॥

ādi sārādā ganapati gauri manā'iya hō.

rāmalalā kara nahachū gā'i sunā'iya hō..

jēhi gāyēm sidhi hōya paramanidhi pā'iya hō.

kōṭi janama kara pātaka dūri sō jā'iya hō..1..

In the beginning, I (Tulsidas) pray to Sarda (“sārādā”; goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech and knowledge), Lord Ganesh (“ganapati”; the son of Shiva and the god who is worshipped at the beginning of any endeavour to invoke his blessings for its successful completion), and Gauri (goddess Parvati, the Mother Goddess and the divine consort of Lord Shiva as well as the mother of Ganesh).

Having invoked their blessings and grace, I shall now sing the auspicious song known as ‘Nahachu’ that pertains to the marriage ceremony of my beloved Lord, Sri

Ram. [The word used here is 'Ram-Lala' meaning 'dear Ram'. The word 'Lala' is used affectionately for a son or a young boy by his elders. Since the occasion when this particular song is sung is prior to Lord Ram's marriage, it is apt to address him as a 'dear boy'. 'Lala' is an affectionate term, and it is liberally used for the groom who is dear to all those attending his marriage.]

By singing this song, one attains all types of Siddhis (successes and achievements in life), and at the same time the singer obtains supreme spiritual asset in the form of bliss, peace and happiness ('Param Nidhi').

Another great benefit of this singing is that the accumulated sins of countless previous births are dissipated and neutralized, and the person finds eternal emancipation and salvation for himself. (1)

[Note—Goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh are always worshipped at the beginning of any effort so that it is successfully completed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, the very first two lines at the beginning that reiterates this view. Here also Tulsidas says that he is about to start narration of the divine story of Lord Ram in Chandas (verses) and is requesting 'Vaani-Vinaayko', i.e. the patron deity of speech, goddess Saraswati, and Lord Vinayak, Ganesh, to bless him.

Parvati is also a giver of auspiciousness and good luck, and by serving or worshipping her nothing remains inaccessible or unfulfilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 67.

During the ritual of the 'Nahachu', the nails and hairs of Lord Ram were cut and trimmed. After this ceremony, the groom takes a bath to clean himself, and then he wears new clean clothes. This has a great symbolic meaning—that is, when a person remembers Lord Ram and sings the divine verses dedicated to the Lord, all his sins and their negative effects on his spiritual well-being are trimmed and cut-off. His earlier unclean self is washed of all the dirt and filth that had been sticking onto him over so many births in the past as well as during the time that has passed in the current life also. His inner self that was feeling restless and tormented by so many problems of mundane life that it had to face daily, now begins to find peace and happiness when the person starts singing the divine story of Lord Ram or even some incident related to the Lord's life, such as this ceremony of 'Nahachu'.

Indeed, just like the physical cleaning of the groom before his marriage and his living a new life with his beloved wife, these verses help the devotee to clean himself of all worldly impurities and prepare to lead a new life in the company of his beloved Lord, Sri Ram.]

कोटिन्ह बाजन बाजहिं दषरथ के गृह हो ।

देवलोक सब देखहिं आनंद अति हिय हो ॥

नगर सोहावन लागत बरनि ज जातै हो ।

कौसल्या के हरष न हृदय समातै हो ॥२॥

kōṭinha bājana bājahim daṣaratha kē gr̥ha hō.

dēvalōka saba dēkhahim ānamda ati hiya hō..

nagara sōhāvana lāgata barani ja jātai hō.

kausalyā kē haraṣa na hr̥daya samātai hō..2..

At the time of Lord Ram's 'Nahachu' ceremony, countless musical instruments were being played in front of the doorway of king Dasrath, his father, to celebrate the occasion.

The Gods watched the celebrations from the heaven, and they were very thrilled and happy.

The city¹ looked so fabulous that it is not possible to describe it.

Happiness and joy are so intense and huge that the heart of Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram) seems unable to accommodate them. [That is, she is overwhelmed with these emotions; she is feeling ecstatic and excited.] (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram is at present at Janakpur where he had gone with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow ceremony. When his father, king Dasrath, was invited by king Janak, the father of Sita, to come over to Janakpur with the marriage party and formalize the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, the guests were lodged at a special place earmarked for them. It was a large area on the outskirts of the city, a sort of mini-city where all arrangements were made for their comfortable stay. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 307.

It was treated as the 'groom's city' for all practical purposes. Hence, this 'Nahachu' ceremony was done here. So it is natural that the musical instruments were played on that occasion in this 'city'.

Musical instruments were routinely played to mark important occasions during the marriage of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(1) Doha no. 324 as well as Chanda stanza no. 1, line no. 2 that precedes it when the marriage rituals were being performed; (2) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343 when the marriage party started from Janakpur for Ayodhya; and (3) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344 when the party arrived at Ayodhya.]

आले हि बाँस के माँड़व मनिगन पूरन हो ।

मोतिन्ह झालर लागि चहूँ दिसि झूलन हो ॥

गंगाजल कर कलस तौ तुरित मँगाइय हो ।

जुवतिन्ह मंगल गाइ राम अन्हवाइय हो ।।3।।

ālē hi bāmśa kē māmṛava manigana pūrana hō.

mōtinha jhālara lāgi cahūm̐ disi jhūlana hō..

gaṅgājala kara kalasa tau turita mamṅā'iya hō.

juvatinha maṅgala gā'i rāma anhavā'iya hō..3..

A platform made from green bamboo was erected. It was with priceless gems and precious stones. Festoons and hangings strung with pearls were hung on all its sides.

A pitcher full of the sacred water of river Ganges was brought, and the ladies of the household made Lord Ram take a bath with it as they sung melodious auspicious songs. (3)

गजमुक्ता हीरामनि चौक पुराइय हो ।

देइ सुअरघ रामकहँ लेइ बैठाइय हो ।।

कनक खंभ चहुँ ओर मध्य सिंहासन हो ।

मानिक दीप बराय बैठि तेहि आसन हो ।।4।।

gajamuktā hīrāmani cauka purā'iya hō.

dē'i su'aragha rāmakaham̐ lē'i baiṭhā'iya hō..

kanaka khambha cahum̐ ōra madhya simhāsana hō.

mānika dīpa barāya baiṭhi tēhi āsana hō..4..

Ceremonial geometrical patterns in the form of squares and circles were made on the ground (with white wheat flour, yellow turmeric powder, saffron and red oxide). These were embellished with 'Gajmuktas' ("gajamuktā"; which is sap effusing from the head of elephants when they are in heat; it solidifies and forms 'pearl-like' rounded globules), 'Hiraas' ("hīrā"; diamonds) and 'Manis' ("mani"; other precious stones and gems).

Consecrated water was poured slowly from a spouted pot in front of Lord Ram as he was escorted to this decorated pavilion and made to sit there on the designated seat. [This is known as ‘Aragha’. The honoured guest is escorted to the seat while a thin stream of water is poured in his front from some pot as he walks slowly forward.]

The pavilion has golden pillars on all its corners. In its center is a magnificent throne. Lord Ram sat on that throne and lit an oil lamp made from ruby. (4)

[Note—The tradition of making geometrical patterns of various shapes and sizes on the ground during religious ceremonies and festivals is common in India. There are umpteen numbers of instances in Ram Charit Manas where such squares and circles are made. In common parlance they are known as ‘Chowk’—meaning a square. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 288—the occasion is the preparation of the venue of the marriage at Janakpur; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 8—the occasion is Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, preparing to celebrate the news that said that king Dasrath proposed to anoint Lord Ram to the throne of Ayodhya; and again (c) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 9—the occasion here is the preparation being made in Ayodhya to welcome the Lord upon his return from the 14-year forest exile and the conquest of Lanka.]

बनि-बनि आवति नारि जानि गृह मायन हो ।

बिहँसत आव लोहारिनि हाथ बरायन हो ॥

अहिरिनि हाथ दहेंड़ि सगुन लेइ आवइ हो ।

उनरत जो वनु देखिं नृपति मन भावइ हो ॥5॥

bani-bani āvati nāri jāni gr̥ha māyana hō.

bihamśata āva lōhārini hātha barāyana hō..

ahirini hātha dahēṇḍi saguna lē'i āva'i hō.

unarata jō vanu dēkhiṁ nr̥pati mana bhāva'i hō..5..

When the ladies learnt that the auspicious time for the ‘Maayan’ ritual has arrived, they decorated themselves in all finery and arrived at the venue. [‘Maayan’ is a rite when the groom is made to pay his obeisance to the patron goddesses of the family, as well as to the spirit of dead ancestors known as Pitras. It is done to seek their blessings.]

Female members of the iron-smiths’ families came cheerfully, laughing and rejoicing, with iron bracelets known as ‘Baraayan’ in hand. [This iron bracelet is to be worn by the groom, and he rewards these ladies with gifts. The iron ring is used instead

of gem-studded bracelet because it is believed that iron helps to ward off evil spirits and afford protection to the groom from bad effects of black magic. The female iron-smith was very happy because she expected rich gifts from the groom, Lord Ram, and his parents, king Dasrath and mother Kaushalya.]

Then came the milkmaid with a clay pitcher full of curd in her hands. [This is also regarded as a good omen.] She was young and pretty, and her charming image even enchanted the king. (5)

रूप सलोनि तँबोलिनि बीरा हाथेहि हो ।

जाकी ओर बिलोकहि मन तेहि साथे हि हो ॥

दरजिनि गोरेगात लिहे कर जोरा हो ।

केसरि परम लगाइ सुगंधन बोरा हो ॥6॥

rūpa salōni tam̐bōlini bīrā hāthēhi hō.

jākī ōra bilōkahi mana tēhi sāthē hi hō..

darajini gōrēgāta lihē kara jōrā hō.

kēsari parama lagā'i sugandhana bōrā hō..6..

The next to come was the pretty female betel-leaf seller. She had a lovely pair of betel leaves finely folded in her palms. She was so pretty that all eyes turned towards her, and whomsoever she glanced felt lucky and found that his or her mind was riveted to her. [The beautiful betel seller enchanted everyone present there by her beauty and glamour.]

After her was the turn of the female tailor who was of a fair complexion. She arrived with a wonderful set of garments that were to be worn by the groom in her fair-complexioned hands. It consisted of a long shirt (known as a 'Kurta'), a length of cloth that is wrapped around the lower part of the body (known as the 'Dhoti'), and a turban (known as 'Paag').

These garments were coloured in saffron and dipped in perfumes. (6)

मोचिनि बदन—सकोचिनि हीरा माँगन हो ।

पनहि लिहे कर सोभित सुन्दर आँगन हो ॥

बतिया कै सुधरि मलिनिया सुंदरि गावतहि हो ।

कनक रतन मनि मौर लिहे मुसुकातहि हो ।।7।।

mōcini badana-sakōcini hīrā māmṅana hō.

panahi lihē kara sōbhita sundara āmṅana hō..

batiyā kai sudhari maliniyā sundari gāvatahi hō.

kanaka ratana mani maura lihē musukātahi hō..7..

The wife of the shoemaker (the cobbler's wife) arrived with her contribution (gift). She was hesitant to go near the groom and so stood shyly in the forecourt of the venue. She had a diamond-studded hair-pin on her forehead and carried a beautiful pair of shoes for the groom (Lord Ram) in her hands. [She was hesitant to enter the pavilion because being a cobbler's wife she felt uneasy when she saw the high and the mighty on the dais. She could not gather enough self-confidence to go right up to the place where the groom, Sri Ram, was seated. So she sheepishly stood outside.]

Meanwhile, the gardener's beautiful wife, who is very clever at talking, also arrived and stood with a broad smile on her face. She had brought with her a fabulous tiara made of gold that was studded with priceless gems and precious stones. [This ornament is worn on the groom's turban.] (7)

[Note—The cobbler's wife is standing quietly in a sheepish manner, while the gardener's wife is chirpy, talking away merrily with all those who stood with her.]

कटि कै झीनि बरिनियाँ छाता पानिहि हो ।

चंद्रबदनि मृगलोचनि सब रसखानिहि हो ।।

नैन बिसाल नउनियाँ भौं चमकावइ हो ।

देइ गारी रनिवासहि प्रमुदित गावइ हो ।।8।।

kaṭi kai jhīni bariniyām' chātā pānihi hō.

candrabadani mrgalōcani saba rasakhānihi hō..

naina bisāla na'uniyām' bhaurṁ camakāva'i hō.

dē'i gārī ranivāsahi pramudita gāva'i hō..8..

The next to turn up was the washer-man's wife. She had a slim waist and stood with an umbrella in hand. Her face was beautiful like a full moon, and her eyes were equally like a female deer. She was so attractive that it appeared that she was a treasury of the virtue of charm.

The barber's wife was also there. She had large eyes, and her eyebrows were flickering and twirling mischievously as she merrily sang songs with taunting lyrics targeted at the queens of the royal household. [On such happy occasions as a marriage in the family, it is a practice of singing some teasing songs. No one feels offended by them; rather the people enjoy these songs as they make them laugh and help to make the atmosphere jovial and entertaining. This is the reason why this lady's eyebrows and eyes are moving in a mischievous manner. She is deriving immense pleasure by making lewd remarks which is unthinkable under normal circumstances. She seems to thoroughly enjoying herself.] (8)

कौसिल्या की जेठि दीन्ह अनुसासन हो ।

‘नहछू जाइ करावहु बैठि सिंहासन हो ।।’

गोद लिहे कौसिल्या बैठि रामहि वर हो ।

सोभित दूलह राम सीस पर आँचर हो ।।९।।

kausilyā kī jēṭhi dīnha anusāsana hō.

‘nahachū jā'i karāvahu baiṭhi simhāsana hō..’

gōda lihē kausilyā baiṭhi rāmahi vara hō.

sōbhita dūlaha rāma sīsa para ām̐cara hō..9..

The elders in the family (such as the wife of the clan's Guru, sage Vashistha) requested asked Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram)—‘Go to the throne (the decorated seat where Lord Ram was seated in center of the pavilion) and perform the ‘Nahachu’ ceremony.’¹

So, Kaushalya sat on the throne with Lord Ram on her laps*. She had covered his head with her ‘Anchal’, i.e. with the end of her long and seamless wearing apparel known as a Sari that is worn by ladies by wrapping it around their bodies.

This sight made Lord Ram look very cute and lovely. (9)

[Note—The ‘Nahachu’ ceremony involves the cutting of the hairs on the head, the shaving of the beard, and the trimming of the nails on the hand and the feet of the groom. *The mother makes the son sit on her laps, and the barber's wife performs

this ritual. So Lord Ram's mother, Kaushalya, made him sit on her laps while the barber's wife trimmed his hairs and nails.]

नाउनि अति गुन खानि तौ बेगि बोलाई हो ।

करि सिंगार अति लोन तौ बिहँसति आई हो ॥

कनक चुनिन सों लसित नहरनी लिये कर हो ।

आनँद हिय न समाइ देखि रामहि वर हो ॥10॥

nā'uni ati guna khāni tau bēgi bōlā'ī hō.

kari siṅgāra ati lōna tau bihamśati ā'ī hō..

kanaka cunina sōm lasita naharanī liyē kara hō.

ānamḍa hiya na samā'ī dēkhi rāmahi vara hō..10..

The barber's skilled wife was immediately summoned to perform the ritual (of Nahachu). She came there, fully decorated and smiling cheerfully.

She held a small scissor and a nail-cutter made of gold and studded with precious stones. Happiness and joy seemed to overflow from her heart as she watched Lord Ram as a groom from such close quarters. (10)

[Note—This is the reason why the barber's wife appeared to be very happy as she moved her eyes and eyebrows mischievously as described in verse no. 8 above. She was feeling proud and privileged that today she is going to acquire a special status as being the only woman from amongst all those who were standing in a queue who will be called to perform an essential ceremony associated with Lord Ram's marriage, the ceremony of the 'Nahachu'. By doing this she will get a rare opportunity to touch the holy feet of Lord Ram, the feet that has such great mystical powers that they provided liberation and deliverance to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who had been converted into a stone by a curse. When the Lord touched this stone, Ahilya was freed from the curse and went back to her husband, sage Gautam. So it is natural that the barber's wife should feel highly excited and lucky—making her twirl her eyes and eyebrows.

This incident of liberation of Ahilya is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 211 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and the whole of the Chanda that follows them.]

काने कनक तरीवन, बेसरि सोहइ हो ।
 गजमुकुता कर हार कंठमनि मोहइ हो ॥
 कर कँकन, कटि किंकिनि, नूपुर बाजइ हों ।
 रानी कै दीन्हीं सारी तौ अधिक बिराजइ हों ॥11॥

kānē kanaka tarīvana, bēsari sōha'i hō.
 gajamukutā kara hāra kaṇṭhamani mōha'i hō..
 kara kaṁkana, kaṭi kiṁkini, nūpura bāja'i hōm.
 rānī kai dīnhīm sārī tau adhika birāja'i hōm..11..

[This verse describes the ornaments that the barber's wife wore on that occasion.]

She was wearing a beautiful ear-ring made of gold that was moulded to look like a golden flower. Her nose was adorned by a nose-ring. A long necklace made of 'Gajamukta' (the pearl-like solidified sap effusing from the forehead of elephants when they are in heat; regarded as a rare piece of jewelry) dangled over her chest, and a similar smaller necklace adorned her neck. This sight enchanted the mind of viewers.

She was adorned by bangles on her wrists and arm-bands on her biceps. The waist-band around her slim waist and the anklets worn on her feet chimed sweetly.

The Sari (the long seamless cloth wrapped around the body by Indian ladies) that she wore for the occasion was gifted to her by Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram), and she looked wonderful in it. [Kaushalya had got a special Sari made for this occasion, and it was richly embroidered with golden and silver threads. So, when the barber's wife came adorned with this Sari and other specially crafted ornaments, she indeed looked fabulous.] (11)

काहे राम जिउ साँवर, लछिमन गोर हो ।
 की दहुँ रानि कौसिलहि परिगा भोर हो ॥
 राम अहहिं दसरथ कइ लछिमन आनक हों ।
 भरत सत्रुहन भाइ तौ श्रीरघुनाथ क हो ॥12॥

kāhē rāma ji'u sāmvara, lachimana gōra hō.

kī dahum̐ rāni kausilahi parigā bhōra hō..

rāma ahahim̐ dasaratha ka'i lachimana ānaka hōm̐.

bharata satruhana bhā'i tau śrīraghunātha ka hō..12..

[It must be noted while reading this verse that on such occasions as a marriage in the family, the lady singers are invited to sing songs with many teasing lyrics that may seem apparently vulgar, but are sung not with any malefic intentions against anybody but just as a medium of making the atmosphere light by cracking jokes to make people laugh and smile in mirth. No one takes them seriously, and everyone enjoys them. If they are not sung due to some reason, the attending guests feel that they are missing an opportunity to laugh and poke fun at each other. So these songs have become sort of mandatory during marriage celebrations.]

The ladies (barber's wife and all other women who had assembled at the venue as listed earlier in verse nos. 5-8) sang songs, the lyrics of which meant briefly as follows— 'Why is Ram of a dark complexion, whereas Laxman is of a fair complexion (like his parent, mother Sumitra)? It appears that Kaushalya is confused or is being misled. [The implication is obvious. Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, was of a fair complexion, so this line of the song meant that Ram's mother was someone else. It was intended to tease Kaushalya as well as king Dasrath. But, as has been said in the introductory note of this verse, such lyrics were part of the fun, and never meant to insult or abuse or cast doubts about anyone's integrity at all.]

[When the singer uttered these words, Laxman seemed to get angry, so she immediately changed track and struck back at him with these taunting remarks—] Let me correct myself. Lord Ram is indeed the son of Dasrath (because the king is of a dark complexion), but it seems that Laxman is not so (because he is of a fair complexion and therefore does not resemble his father, Dasrath, like his elder brother Ram, who does). [Normally, the sons of a father inherit his characteristics. For instance, if the father has a dark complexion his children will also have a darkish complexion, but definitely not white or fair. So this singer now targets Laxman as he was of a fair complexion unlike his father, king Dasrath, and his brother, Lord Ram, both of whom were of a dark complexion.]

[Lord Ram's other two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, kept quiet. So the singer excused them from any embarrassment when she sang—] It is definite that Bharat and Shatrughan are the brothers of Raghunath, Lord Ram.'

[The singer taunted Laxman but left the other two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan alone. This is because Laxman showed annoyance at her first remark against Lord Ram, forgetting that this was not intended to insult the Lord but was part of age-old tradition. The singer knew that she would not be punished by shooting back at Laxman by another scathing remark. Since Bharat and Shatrughan maintained their calm, she excused them. No one minded this aside, and it was taken in the right spirit of rejoicing that corresponded with the occasion.] (12)

आजु अवधपुर आनंद नहछू राम क हो ।

चलहु नयन भरि देखिय सोभाधाम क हो ॥

अति बड़भाग नउनियाँ छुए नख हाथ सों हो ।

नैनन्ह करत गुमान तौ श्रीरघुनाथ सों हो ॥13॥

āju avadhapura ānam̐da nahachū rāma ka hō.

calahu nayana bhari dēkhiya sōbhādhāma ka hō..

ati barābhāga na'uniyām̐ chu'ē nakha hātha sōm̐ hō.

nainanha karata gumāna tau śrīraghunātha sōm̐ hō..13..

There was a talk amongst the subjects of the kingdom of Ayodhya that today was the 'Nahachu' ceremony of Lord Ram, and so all must go and watch the magnificent sight of the image of Lord Ram undergoing this ritual till their eyes were full of it.

Meanwhile, the barber's wife, who was exceedingly lucky at having got an opportunity of holding Lord Ram's feet, touched the Lord's toe nails with her hands as her eyes glowed with pride and happiness. [She was ecstatic for two reasons. One was that she will now get gifts as per her demands, and second was that she was so lucky that she could hold the holy feet of the Lord which very few people can ever hope to access and touch. See verse no. 14 below which explains why this lady was so lucky and happy.] (13)

जो पग नाउनि धोवइ राम धोवावई हो ।

सो पगधूरि सिद्ध—मुनि दरस न पावई हो ॥

अतिसय पुहुप क माल राम—उर सोहइ हो ।

तिरछी चितवनि आनंदमनि मुख जोहइ हो ॥14॥

jō paga nā'uni dhōva'i rāma dhōvāva'im̐ hō.

sō pagadhūri sid'dha-muni darasa na pāva'im̐ hō..

atisaya puhupa ka māla rāma-ura sōha'i hō.

tirachī citavani ānamdamani mukha jōha'i hō..14..

The holy feet of Lord Ram that the barber's wife washed, and which the Lord willingly allowed her to wash, are so divine and holy that even great Siddhas (mystics) and Munis (hermits, sages and seers) long to have a divine vision of the dust of the same feet but cannot do so, or find it very difficult even after making great efforts. [This is the reason why the barber's wife is feeling proud and happy. Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being in a human form. It is not easy to attain the Lord's holy feet unless the seeker had done great sacrifices and prepare himself by doing penances and observing austerity. The same feet were willingly offered by the Lord for the purpose of cutting the toe-nails during the Nahachu ritual to this ordinary barber's wife. Naturally therefore she was ecstatic and happy beyond measure.]

The garland of flowers on the chest of Lord Ram looks very magnificent and adorable.

The mesmerized barber's wife gazed at the Lord's beautiful face and his enchanting image that gives immense happiness to the beholder as she held his feet in her hand (and forgot about the task at hand). (14)

नख काटत मुसुकाहिं बरनि नहिं जातहि हो ।

पदुमराग—मनि मानहु कोमल गातहि हो ॥

जावक रचति अँगुरिअन्ह मृदुल सुठारी हो ।

प्रभु कर चरन प्रछलि तौ अति सुकुमारी हो ॥15॥

nakha kāṭata musukāhiṁ barani nahim jātahi hō.

padumarāga-mani mānahu kōmala gātahi hō..

jāvaka racati amṅuri'anha mṛdula suṭhārī hō.

prabhu kara carana prachali tau ati sukumārī hō..15..

Lord Ram smiled as his nails were being trimmed. It is not possible to describe the stunning beauty of that image of the Lord. The nails had been polished red, so they looked as if red ruby have been embedded and arranged in a neat row in some soft velvet

cloth. [Here, the soft skin of Lord Ram's feet is compared to the velvet, and the red-coloured nails to the ruby. It is a practice in India that the palms, fingers and nails of the hands, as well as the lower part of the legs from the ankle downwards to the toe nails of both the groom and the bride are coloured in red by applying a thick paste of 'Mehandi' (which is a paste made from the leaves of the myrtle plant).]

After manicuring the nails and washing the feet of Lord Ram, the barber's wife carefully began to make delicate designs on the soft but well-formed toes of the Lord by using a special paint known as 'Mahaavar', also known as 'Aaltaa'. [Mahaavar is a red paint prepared from lac and applied on the skin of the hand and the feet during auspicious occasions, such as marriage. The 'lac' is a resinous substance secreted as a protective covering by the lac insect, and it is used to make varnish, shellac and nail polish etc.] (15)

भइ निवछावरि बहु बिधि जो जस लायक हो ।

तुलसिदास बलि जाउँ देखि रघुनायक हो ॥

राजन दीन्हे हाथी, रानिन्ह हार हो ।

भरि गे रतन पदारथ सूप हजार हो ॥16॥

bha'i nivachāvari bahu bidhi jō jasa lāyaka hō.

tulasidāsa bali jā'um' dēkhi raghunāyaka hō..

rājana dīnhē hāthī, rāninha hāra hō.

bhari gē ratana padāratha sūpa hajāra hō..16..

At that time, large quantum of gifts of different kinds were given liberally to everyone according to his or her eligibility, needs and status.

Tulsidas says that he has nothing to offer but his own self, so he does so as he remembers the wonderful and enchanting image of Raghunayak, the chief of king Raghu's race, i.e. his Lord, Sri Ram.

The king (Dasrath) gifted elephants, and the queens gifted necklaces. The gifts were so liberally given that thousands of 'Soops' (a winnowing basket) were filled and overflowed with precious gems and priceless stones. (16)

[Note—It is not mentioned in the verse exactly to whom these gifts were given. But the tradition is that the barber's wife who cleans the feet of the groom and cuts his nails gets the largest share. But the king was very generous, so he also gave other women who were waiting for their turn to receive gifts. They have been listed earlier in verse nos. 5-8—the iron smith's wife, the milkmaid, the

betel-leaf seller's wife, the tailor's wife, the cobbler's wife, the gardener's wife, the washer-man's wife, and then finally the barber's wife. Not only them, there must have been hundreds of others queuing up to receive gifts, and hence it is certain that all of them were given liberal gifts.]

भरि गाड़ी नेवछावरि नाउ लेइ आवइ हो ।

परिजन करहि निहाल असीसत आवइ हो ॥

तापर करहिं सुमौज बहुत दुख खोवहिं हो ।

होइ सुखी सब लोग अधिक सुख सोवहिं हो ॥17॥

bhari gārī nēvachāvari nā'u lē'i āva'i hō.

parijana karahi nihāla asīsata āva'i hō..

tāpara karahiṁ sumauja bahuta dukha khōvahiṁ hō.

hō'i sukhī saba lōga adhika sukha sōvahiṁ hō..17..

The barber collected all the gifts on his cart and started on his way home. On the way he generously gave away whatever was asked from him by his relatives, kith and kin who blessed him profusely.

[The occasion was of Lord Ram's marriage, and so everyone was exceptionally happy. Whatever they got as gifts themselves, they didn't hesitate in sharing them with others who approached them to bless them and laud their good luck. A same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas in the context of the celebrations that followed the birth of Lord Ram and his other three brothers. It is said in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194 that—"Everyone gave away as charity whatever they had; no one kept anything for himself. Even those who got them immediately gave them to others."]

By giving away to others the gifts that the barber had received (from the king), he felt very happy and contented. Everyone was joyful and happy, and they slept peacefully that night. [This 'sleeping peacefully' is a figure of speech to mean that everyone was satisfied and happy. No one was left wanting anything. There was no jealousy and ill-will amongst the alms seekers as is normally the case, because all of them were fully satisfied.] (17)

गावहिं सब रनिवास देहिं प्रभु गारी हो ।
 राम लला सकुचाहिं देखि महतारी हो ॥
 हिलिमिलि करत सवाँग 'सभा रस केलि' हो ।
 नाउनि मन हरषाइ सुगंधन मेलि हो ॥18॥

gāvahiṁ saba ranivāsa dēhiṁ prabhu gārī hō.
 rāma lalā sakucāhiṁ dēkhi mahatārī hō..

hilimili karata savāmṅa 'sabhā rasa kēli' hō.
 nā'uni mana haraṣā'i sugandhana mēli hō..18..

Everyone in the royal palace sang jovial songs, and used lyrics that teased Lord Ram. The Lord felt shy when he heard these songs, and occasionally glanced abashedly at his mother (as if to say 'why don't you stop these ladies from taunting me and singing such songs that are making me uneasy'. The mother, however, responded by merely smiling back as she knew that it was just a tradition and these songs were not meant to be anything serious.)

There was fun and flocking in the royal household that night, and everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

The barber's wife feels happy as she cheerfully sprayed exquisite scents and exotic perfumes on the assembly. [This statement shows that the barber's wife stayed back to join the rest of the royal ladies in the celebrations that followed the ritual of the 'Nahachu'. Though it is not mentioned here clearly, all the other women listed in verse nos. 5-8 must also have stayed back as the palaces of great kings had a huge retinue of servants and attendants.] (18)

दूलह कै महतारी देखि मन हरषइ हो ।
 कोटिन्ह दीन्हेउ दान मेघ जनु बरषइ हो ॥
 रामलला कर नहछू अतिसुख गाइय हो ।
 जेहि गाये सिद्धि होइ परम निधि पाइय हो ॥19॥

dūlaha kai mahatārī dēkhi mana haraṣa'i hō.

kōṭinha dīnhē'u dāna mēgha janu baradḍha'i hō..

rāmālālā kara nahachū atisukha gā'iya hō.

jēhi gāyē sid'dhi hō'i parama nidhi pā'iya hō..19..

The mother (Kaushalya) was very contented and exhilarated as she watched her dear son (Lord Ram) dressed and decked up as a groom. She was so happy that she gave liberal donations which resembled the rain falling from the cloud. [That is, just like the rain falling from the cloud liberally provides the earth with water to such an extent that all the crevices and gaps in it are choked and the surplus rain-water begins to flow on the surface of the earth in streams, the donations made by Kaushalya were also huge and countless.]

One should cheerfully sing these verses related to the 'Nahachu' ceremony of Lord Ram as it provides success in attaining all sorts of 'Siddhis' (success in any enterprise) as well as the 'Param Nidhi' (the supreme asset in the form of mental and spiritual peace and happiness). (19)

दसरथ राउ सिंहासन बैठि बिराजहिं हो ।

तुलसिदास बलि जाहि देखि रघुराजहि हो ।।

जे यह नहछू गावैं गाइ सुनावइँ हो ।

रिद्धि—सिद्धि कल्याण मुकुति नर पावइँ हो ।।20।।

dasaratha rā'u simhāsana baiṭhi birājahim hō.

tulasidāsa bali jāhi dēkhi raghurājahi hō..

jē yaha nahachū gāvaim gā'i sunāva'im hō.

rid'dhi-sid'dhi kalyāna mukuti nara pāva'im hō..20..

King Dasrath is sitting on a majestic throne. Tulsidas says that he sacrifices himself at this sight of 'Raghuraaj*' (literally meaning the king of the Raghu dynasty) to show his respect and honour for him because he (the king) was so lucky and privileged to have Lord Ram (the incarnate Supreme Being) as his son, and was able to call himself the Lord's 'father'.

[*There is another interpretation of this part of the verse. The word ‘Raghuraaaj’ is profusely used by Tulsidas to mean Lord Ram in all his texts. So, if we take this meaning into consideration, then the whole interpretation changes. Then this 2nd line would mean—“Tulsidas watches Lord Ram (Raghuraaaj)—who must have been sitting by the side of his father, king Dasrath, on the throne—and feels so ecstatic and happy that he (Tulsidas) sacrifices himself at this sight. He feels overwhelmed with joy at this sight, and in order to express his gratitude he offers himself because it is the greatest of sacrifices and gifts one can give.”]

Those people who sing themselves the verses of this collection of verses known as ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’, and make others sing them, are able to obtain all sorts of ‘Riddhis’ (material objects in this world) and ‘Siddhis’ (mystical powers). They also have all welfare for themselves while alive, and upon death they attain liberation and deliverance for their souls. (20)

Thus ends this classical composition known as ‘Rāmalalā Nahachū’ of Goswami Tulsidas.

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Rāmalalā Nahachū

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration,
English Exposition with detailed Notes)

APPENDIX

Ārti of Lord Rām

We shall quote two verses that describe the performance of “Aarti” of Lord Ram from Goswami Tulsidas’ classic compilation of devotional hymns in his book called “Vinai Patrika”. These verses are nos. 47 and 48 in the aforesaid book.

(47)

ऐसी आरती राम रघुबीरकी करहि मन ।
हरन दुखदुंद गोबिंद आनन्दघन ॥1॥
अचरचर रूप हरि, सरबगत, सरबदा बसत, इति बासना धूप दीजै ।
दीप निजबोधगत—कोह—मद—मोह—तम, प्रौढ़अभिमान चितवृत्ति छीजै ॥2॥
भाव अतिशय विशद प्रवर नैवेद्य शुभ श्रीरमण परम संतोषकारी ।
प्रेम—तांबूल गत शूल संशय सकल, विपुल भव—वासना—बीजहारी ॥3॥
अशुभ—शुभकर्म—घृतपूर्ण दश वर्तिका, त्याग पावक, सतो गुण प्रकासं ।
भक्ति—वैराग्य—विज्ञान दीपावली, अर्पि नीराजनं जगनिवासं ॥4॥
विमल हृदि भवन कृत शांति पर्यंक शुभ, शयन विश्राम श्रीरामराया ।
क्षमा—करुणा प्रमुख तत्र परिचारिका, यत्र हरि तत्र नहिं भेद, माया ॥5॥
एहि आरति—निरत सनकादि, श्रुति, शेष, शिव, देवरिषि, अखिलमुनि तत्त्व—दरसी ।
करै सोइ तरै, परिहरै कामादि मल, वदति इति अमलमति—दास तुलसी ॥6॥

(47)

aisī āratī rāma raghubīrakī karahi mana.
 harana dukhadunda gōbinda ānandaghana. 1.
 acaracara rūpa hari, sarabagata, sarabadā basata, iti bāsanā dhūpa dījai.
 dīpa nijabōdhagata-kōha-mada-mōha-tama, praur̥ha'abhimāna citabr̥tti chījai. 2.
 bhāva atīśaya viśada pravara naivēdya śubha śrīramaṇa parama santōṣakārī.
 prēma-tāmbūla gata śūla sanśaya sakala, vipula bhava-vāsanā-bījahārī. 3.
 aśubha-śubhakarma-ghṛtapūr̥ṇa daśa vartikā, tyāga pāvaka, satōguṇa prakāsaṁ.
 bhakti-vairāgya-vijñāna dīpāvalī, arpi nīrājanaṁ jaganivāsaṁ. 4.
 vimala hr̥di bhavana kṛta śānti paryaṅka śubha, śayana viśrāma śrīrāmarāyā.
 kṣamā-karuṇā pramukha tatra paricārikā, yatra hari tatra nahiṁ bhēda, māyā. 5.
 ēhi āratī-nirata sanakādi,śruti,śēṣa,śiva,dēvariṣi,akhilamuni tatva-darasī.
 karai sō'i tarai, pariharai kāmādi mala, vadati iti amalapati-dāsa tulasī. 6.

Verse no. 47—[Tulsidas addresses his mind and says—] ‘Oh my Mind! Worship, venerate and pay your obeisance to Lord Ram, who is the brave Lord in the dynasty of king Raghu, by doing the Lord’s ‘Aarti’* in a symbolic manner. While doing this Aarti, you should pray to the Lord and remember the Lord’s glories and magnificent virtues as follows—“The Lord is the destroyer of all forms of miseries, sorrows and grief. He is the one who eliminates all confusions, doubts, consternations, perplexities and bewilderments. He is known as Govind who is a treasury of immense bliss, happiness, joy, beatitude and felicity. (1).

Both the animate as well as the inanimate world is a manifestation of Lord Hari (Vishnu) who is all-pervading, omnipresent and eternal.” [While performing the formal form of worship of the Lord by doing his Aarti, follow the following procedure—]

First, burn the various Vasanas (inherent worldly tendencies; desires, lust pertaining to the sense objects of this material world) symbolically in the form of ‘Dhup’ (perfumed incense-sticks) that are lighted during formal worship—this will remove all the foul smell of Bhed in the environment. [Bhed is spiritually corrupting sense of duality that incites a creature to differentiate between Saguna or formed and Nirguna or unformed aspects of the same universal cosmic Lord who is non-dual and immutable.]

As the next step, one should light the ‘Deepak’ (earthen lamps)—that is, he must light the lamp of self-realisation and enlightenment. [That is, the worshipper must strive to become aware of the true nature of the Atma which is his true self and the pure consciousness that is a personification of Brahm, the Supreme Being. He should remove the darkness of ignorance by ‘lighting’ the lamp of wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment.]

This would remove the darkness symbolized by such negativity as Krodh (anger), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness) and Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations). With this maturity of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment, destroy the inherent inclinations of the mind and intellect called the Chitta Vritis. (2).

After that, offer the ‘sweets’ to the Lord in the form of sincerity and highly devotional emotions—such a pure offering of sweets will be most acceptable to Sri Raman (i.e. Lord Vishnu incarnated as Ram). Next, offer the Lord ‘Tambul’ (betel-leaf

and nut) of love and affection. This offering is potent enough to destroy the seed or cause from which all sorts of sorrows, miseries and pains, all sorts of doubts and confusions, and all sorts of worldly passions and yearnings leading to delusions and entrapments arise. (3).

Thereafter, show the Lord ‘light’ of good and auspicious virtues by dipping the wick representing the ten sense organs¹ in the clarified butter (Ghee) of good deeds, and lighted by the fire of renunciation (Tyag). In this way, perform the ‘Aarti’ (ceremonial showing the light of lamps)—symbolized by the eclectic virtues of devotion, renunciation and enlightenment—of the Lord who pervades throughout the creation and is inherently present in it in a subtle, uniform and universal manner. (4).

After performing the Aarti, give ‘rest’ to Lord Ram on a bedstead of peace in the ‘temple’ of your purified heart. Appoint chief ‘maids’ in the form of forgiveness, mercy etc. to serve the Lord there (in your heart as the Lord reclined in it). Wherever Lord Hari (Vishnu; here referring to Lord Ram) lives, there is no room for delusions, confusions and doubts of any kind. (5).

The sages Sankadi², Veda-vyas³, Shukdeo⁴, Narad⁵ and other wise ones, as well as the Gods, Lord Sesh-Nath⁶ and Lord Shiva are always engaged in performing such a symbolic ‘Aarti’ of the Lord (as described above). [That is, they worship the Lord in the prescribed manner outlined in this verse.]

Tulsidas, who strives to be a humble follower of such exalted and enlightened sages and wise ones (i.e. emulates their example), asserts that those who worship the Lord in this way (as described above) are indeed freed from the evils of Kaam (worldly passions and lust and their corrupting influences) etc., and are also able to cross the Bhav-Sagar (ocean representing this mortal, gross and mundane world of entrapments, the world consisting of the endless cycle of birth and death, and its accompanying horrifying miseries and tribulations). (6).

[Note—*“Aarti (āratī)” is a traditional form of worship wherein the object of worship is shown lighted lamp that is waved in front of the worshipped by the worshipper.

Arti is performed during all religious rites to honour the deity worshipped. When an honoured guest arrives at someone’s place, he is also welcomed with a Arti. The plate containing the lighted oil lamps is moved in a clockwise fashion in front of the person or the deity concerned.

The light of the lamps is symbolic of the lighted path that stands for a bright future that is wished for the person to whom the Arti is shown. As for the worshipped deity, they indicate that the deity is being given great respect and honour.

The Arti is a tradition since ancient times in India. It is a gesture to show the concerned person that he is warmly welcome, that his best future is hoped for, and that all his misfortunes represented by darkness should be removed in the light of the lamps.

Refer to verse no. 48 below also.

¹The 10 sense organs referred to in stanza 4 are the following—the five organs of perception such as eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive.

²Sankadi—Sanatkumar and others called ‘Sankaadi Rishis’—Sage Sanatkumar is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanat-sujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood. Together they are called ‘Sanakaadi Rishis’.

Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanat-sujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.

Sanatkumar, along with sages Pippalaad and Angira, had approached sage Atharva to ask him about the highest form of meditation, the different aspects of OM and the culmination of spiritual journey by realising Brahm in the form of Shambhu, one of the names of Lord Shiva, in Atharva Veda’s Atharva-shikha Upanishad.

It is narrated in the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 7, verse no. 8, that he had gone to Lord Kalagnirudra, one of the forms of Lord Shiva and who had first revealed this Upanishad to one sage Bhusund (Brahmans 1-6) to learn about the metaphysical importance and spiritual value of the Rudraksha beads. [Rudraksha beads are the seeds of the tree *Eleocarpus ganitrus*.]

According to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Sanatkumar was taught how to wear the Tripundra, the three lines marked on the forehead of all Hindus, by Lord Kalagnirudra himself.

The Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sages as Sankadi and Sanatsujat (i.e. sages Sanatkumar and others collectively called the Sankaadi Rishis) had praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if these great sages had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

³Veda-vyas— Sage and seer Veda Vyas was the great grandson of sage Vashistha, grandson of sage Shakti, and the son of sage Paraashar and his wife Satyavati, a fisherwoman. Since he had dark complexion, he was also called Krishna, and since he was born on an island, he was called Dvaipayana. Hence his other name was Krishna Dvaipayana.

He is said to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself. The Lord felt that the vast knowledge enshrined in the scriptures were so huge, jumbled up, abstract and complicated that they were beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. Further, till this time, everything was based on memory—hearing and speaking, passing from one generation of disciple to another generation in the oral form. There was a need to sort them out, to codify, systematise and classify this vast ocean of knowledge contained in the Vedas to make them more useful and handy.

So, Vishnu took the form of Veda Vyas to undertake this mammoth, daunting and formidable task. It is believed that Veda Vyas was born at the end of Dwapar Yug during the period of the Mahabharat war.

Soon after his birth, he took permission from his mother Satyawati and went to Badrinath in the Himalayas to do severe penances and austerities (Tapa), and he established his hermitage there. Hence, he was also called 'Badaraayana'. Veda Vyas gathered all the Mantras of the hitherto undivided Vedas, edited them and grouped them according to the use to which they were put during fire sacrifices. He named them according to the class or section of the priests (called Ritwij) who would use them for their ritualistic practices, such as the fire sacrifices. This added another epithet to his name—viz. 'Vyas', the one who knew the Vedas like the back of his hands and was therefore able to classify and divide them into four distinct texts as they now exist; the one who is the best preacher of the subject and made it easy for dissemination and teaching purposes. He classified the Vedas into four basic texts called the Rik, the Atharva, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas.

The four classes of such expert priests and the relevant Vedas were—(i) 'Riks'—they were also the senior most priests who presided over the ritual, and were also called Hota. They chanted the hymns of the Rig Veda. (ii) 'Yajus'—these priests were junior to the Riks and were also called Adhwaryou, and they chanted the verse categorised as the Yajur Veda. (iii) 'Samans'—these priests were the chanters of the holy hymns in chorus, in a loud, clear and melodious voice. They can be called modern day classical singers who attend any great function or festivity. They were also called Udgata. The Sam Veda was meant for them. (iv) 'Atarvans'—these priests did the actual, physical offerings of oblations in the fire pit of the fire sacrifice. They were called Brahma because they represented the senior most God, and the hymns used by them were classified and collected under the name of the Atharva Veda. So, as we have seen, the basic function of this classification was to facilitate the performance of the fire sacrifice.

But this exercise did not give peace of mind to Veda Vyas. His soul was yearning for something higher than these futile ritualistic exercises. So, as a next step, he further classified the Vedas into various Sanhitas, the Brahamans, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

The result of this tireless exercise produced a much vaster tome of spiritual, philosophical and metaphysical literature so much so that Veda Vyas thought it necessary and fit to write the basic tenets and maxims of the Vedas into a single volume for quick referral. This was called 'Vedant Sutra', literally, the key to the Vedas.

The concept of the Vedas was still indigestible and daunting for the masses. So, he rendered the precepts palatable and within the grasp of the common man by resorting to the time-tested and more acceptable method of the story-telling form by writing the eighteen Purans and the eighteen sub-Prans—a stupendous literary achievement of mammoth proportions.

He had also penned the epic Mahabharat besides these eighteen Purans and eighteen sub-Purans. It is said that Ganesh, the most revered and wise son of Shiva who has the head of an elephant, was the scribe who wrote down the dictation of Mahabharat as Veda Vyas narrated it non-stop, a job which is not a child's play. It is also believed that inspite of remaining a chaste saint for life, he

had begot the three legendary figures of Mahabharat, viz. Dhritraastra, Pandu and Vidur, from the wives of Vichitravirya at the behest of his mother Satyawati. He gave divine sight to Sanjay, the charioteer who narrated the on going famous battle of the Mahabharat to Dhritraastra who was blind. Being a contemporary sage of the Mahabharat period, he knew almost all the persons of this great epic.

During the reign of Kurus, he was revered by both the Kurus as well as their arch rivals, the Pandavas. Both the heroes of the epic Mahabharat war held him in high esteem. When he decided to write the story of Mahabharat—the documentary narration of the epic story of clan-fight and the devastating war that followed it—he chose Lord Ganesh as his scribe; Veda Vyas had dictated while Ganesh had written the epic. It is said that the site where the epic Mahabharat was written is called ‘Vyas Gufa’ (Vyas' cave) located near Bharoach while the place where he did his final Tapa is called Vyas Ashram located in the village of Mana two miles from the shrine of Badrinath in the Himalayas. His hermitage during the epic Mahabharat war was located in a village about ten miles north of the city of Ambala in Haryana state. River Saraswati flows nearby. This place is also famous as Vyas Ashram.

Time flew by, but still Veda Vyas did not get peace at heart. Once, while he sat near river Saraswati, full of remorse, unsatisfied and contrite, sage Narad came to him and advised him to write Srimad Bhagwat containing 18000 Slokas. This voluminous work gave him his final peace, so it is said.

His Guru was sage Yagyavalkya. His son was sage Shukdeo, the parrot saint. Veda Vyas chose five chief disciples who were initiated by him in the four Vedas and Purans. They were as follows—(a) He taught Rig Veda to his disciple named Paila; (b) Yajur Veda to his disciple Vaishampaayana; (c) Sam Veda to his disciple Jaimini; (d) Atharva Veda to his disciple Sumanthu; and (e) the Purans to his disciple Ramharshan.

It is believed that sage Veda Vyas still lives, albeit in an invisible, intangible and subtle form in the shape of the vast repertoire of spiritual, philosophical and metaphysical literature that he has created for humankind, something which is not possible for any ordinary human being. These fortify the legend that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and not an ordinary human being, a fact that is extensively covered in Vishnu Puran 3.3.

⁴Shukdeo—Sage Shukdeo was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghrataachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-20, and the entire Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition). He was fortunate enough to have as his wise Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-77) and Lord Shiva himself (refer Shuk Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo).

His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap him in her honey-trap of lust and passions. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug. In an incident narrated in Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21-27 it is described how sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his self control over anger, ego and self-pride of being a son of an enlightened father of the stature of sage Veda Vyas as well as his sincerity and steadfastness of purpose which are important virtues that must be present in a student of spiritualism and important criterion by which his eligibility as a disciple can be judged.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda describes him as a truly Brahm-realised sage along with sage Sankaadi in its Canto 1, verse no. 47.

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The Sharva Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sage as Shukdeo had praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if Shukdeo had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

⁵Narad—The celestial sage Narad is said to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being's Mana (mind and its thoughts, intentions, hopes, desires and wishes, as well as the heart and its emotions and sentiments). The Supreme Being implements his wishes and expresses his intentions and wishes by making Narad his spokesperson. Purans list uncountable instances when Narad has approached people—both the good and righteous as well as the demonic and unrighteous ones—to tell them the path best suited to them, and the wise ones treated this advise as the Lord's wish while the unwise ones still benefited from it because Narad's intention was always to turn a living being away from his sinful ways and lead him towards the good.

Since he is a personified Mana, he is as fickle, unstable and transient as the Mana—never staying at one place for more than a fleeting moment, always roaming here and there in the entire creation, having nothing to stop his path as he could go anywhere he wished. And the remarkable thing is that he was never unwelcome anywhere—even the demons welcomed him with the same respect as did the Gods.

It is believed that he is born in each Kalpa to carry out the wishes of the Supreme Being. [1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion human years.] He was a Gandharva (a semi-God who is a celestial musician) named Upbarhan in the previous Kalpa. He was physically very charming and an expert musician. Once he showed his amorous intentions towards Urvashi, a celestial dancer, in the presence of Brahma the creator where he was supposed to show exemplary restraint, and this overt show of lust resulted in his being cursed by Brahma that he would become fallen and take birth in the mortal world as a Shudra (a low

caste). So, he was born from a maid servant of low caste working as a devoted servant of a learned Brahmin. Under the constant companion of this great Brahmin, Narad developed noble and auspicious virtues in him even though he was a mere child of five years. He was very modest, devoted, pious, noble hearted and diligent.

Since he had the Lord's genes in him, his inclinations were more inclined towards the Spirit than the worldly charms of material sense objects which he detested from childhood. As luck would have it, once some wandering mendicants came to spend the four-month period of the rainy season in the hermitage of this Brahmin. Narad served them with great devotion. Impressed by his service and having some inner vision of his high spiritual stature and the spark of divinity that was lying hidden in him waiting for an opportune moment to leap up and shine through, they blessed him, taught him meditation and contemplation, besides initiating the child into the path of the Lord.

Thus, the dormant fire of renunciation and spiritual awareness was immediately ignited in Narad's little heart and he wished to take to Sanyas (a renunciate's life marked by constant wandering as a mendicant in search of the supreme bliss and Truth), but he did not wish to hurt his mother's emotions. But the Lord had other plans for him, and soon his wish was fulfilled when his loving mother died of snake bite while milking a cow. Instead of grieving at such a loss in human terms, the child Narad felt happy as if the last fetter was broken and he was liberated from worldly obligations.

He immediately headed north towards the mighty Himalaya Mountains to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to attain access to the Supreme Being. The little one walked on and on, and finally he was so tired and exhausted that when he saw a cool lake he drank water, ate fruits that he found there, and sat under the shadow of a tree and became lost in meditation. Lord Vishnu revealed himself in his four-arm form in his heart, but Narad was so thrilled and excited with this divine vision that he wished to see the Lord in practical terms with his physical eyes rather than the subtle eyes while he was in deep meditation. But as soon as he opened the eyes, the Lord vanished. Most sorry and overwhelmed with this loss, the child began to cry bitterly. Then a cosmic formless reverberating voice said—'Oh son! Your penance is accepted, and I do love you. Though I bless you with an eternal life and that your memory of me would never be erased, but you would not be able to see me with physical eyes in this world. So go back to the world and carry out my divine mandate for me. Become my messenger and go preach the path of my devotion and holy name to this world so that other unfortunate creatures also can get liberation and deliverance from the fetters in which they have bound themselves with no one to show them an easy and practical way out of their predicaments. Go and preach my message to such people in every corner of the earth; go and preach my devotion and let them have faith in my holy name. Your salvation would come naturally and automatically to you as an unasked reward.'

Narad turned back with this divine mandate of the Lord to be carried out just like the great Apostles of Lord Jesus Christ had went, on the Lord's instructions, to spread his message to the people on this earth. Henceforth, he wandered in the

entire creation like a mendicant, with an Indian lute upon which he sang the Lord's glories and his divine name, spreading the divine message of the Lord's mercy, compassion, benevolence and love everywhere, attempting to turn everyone towards the Lord and away from this sinful and mortal world so that each individual creature could get his spiritual liberation and deliverance. Such are the ways of great and holy saints that instead of being selfish to seek his own liberation and deliverance from the Lord as the grant of a boon and letting the rest of the world go to hell, Narad chose to sacrifice his own life, liberation and deliverance at the altar of larger good of creation and to fulfill the wish of the Lord. Of course there is another twist to this tale—the Lord does not select everyone to carry on his own divine agenda, and a soul who the Lord designates for this purpose is indeed the most favoured and lucky one—because the Emperor chooses only those upon whom he has utmost confidence to carry out his personal task. It is just like Jesus choosing his disciples and ordaining them the task of spreading his glorious Gospel of love and salvation.

Therefore, Narad, the apostle of the Supreme Being, is the most loved disciple of the Lord, and it is evidenced by the fact that he is the only saint who has unrestricted access to the abode of the Trinity Gods (Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder of this creation) besides every nook and corner of creation without hindrance and even without seeking any previous permission and appointment from anyone, be it a God or a Demon or anybody else. Narad's visit was always for the host's long term good, so he was always welcome and revered.

When the time came and the age of the physical body ended, he left the mortal coil like a serpent leaves its cuticle and went to heaven to sing the Lord's holy and divine name in the presence of Brahma, the old patriarch of creation. At the end of the Kalpa, at the time of Doomsday, he merged and became one with Brahma, the creator.

When the new cycle of creation came into being, he was born again from the Mana (mind) of Brahma the creator after the Sankadi sages were born. That is why, in the present Kalpa, Narad is called the 'Manas Putra' of Brahma, i.e. the son born out of Brahma's mental powers or his wishes. With this heritage and gene running in his blood, it is natural that he is highly respected and regarded as one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Being personified. It is from the navel of Lord Vishnu that Brahma, the creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine Lotus that emerged from it while he was reclining on the bed made of the coiled body of the legendary serpent named Seshnath who floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar.

Narad preached renunciation of this material world and an extreme sense of faith in and complete devotion for Lord Hari (Narayan, Vishnu, the Supreme Being). But this was against the process of creation, because if everyone followed the path preached by Narad and renounced the material world then the process of propagation of the world and its inhabitant creatures along with its development would come to a naught. So, when Narad preached renunciation and detachment from this material world of sense objects that was mortal, transient and never a

giver of peace and happiness to the ten thousand mental sons who were created by Daksha Prajapati (the first male from whom the rest of the human race was born and who was assigned the task by Brahma to propagate creation) in order to propagate this human race, Narad obviously annoyed him. These sons were preached by Narad and they all became mendicants, renouncing their attachment with this life and all charms of the material world along with the desire to enjoy it, gratify their sense organs and remain entangled in affairs of this world. Daksha Prajapati was exasperated and he created another set of ten thousand sons. But when Narad again played spoil-sport, Daksha cursed him that Narad would have to remain on the move always and he would not be able to stay at one place for more than two 'Gharis'. [1 Ghari = 24 minutes. In practice the term means a very short period of time; a fleeting moment as small as batting an eyelid.] As a result of this curse, Narad became an ever-wandering mendicant. But this suited the divine mandate of the Lord—for now Narad was forced to keep on the move and reach newer corners of the worldly and celestial realm to preach the Lord's message amongst the mortal creatures on earth and the Gods and Spirits in the heaven.

It is believed that Narad is immortal and is symbolic of the stupendous powers of a man's mind. The mind is ever-wandering like Narad, and the subtle message in the entire lore is that one should tame this restless mind and train it to turn away from this mortal engrossing material world and instead turn towards the Lord for finding permanent liberation and deliverance from this world. A wise mind would teach (preach) the aspirant about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, and instead seek ways of finding the Truth that gives eternity and brings to an end the endless litany of miseries and horrors, perplexities and confusions, restlessness and agitations that are invariably associated with un-truth, delusions and ignorance.

Narad was the most erudite and scholarly devotee of the Lord. No other sage or saint could match him in his scholarly acumen and profundity of wisdom (ref. Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 1, verse no. 2). Narad is also credited with the composition of the great Sutra (formula or key) called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra' which defines the eclectic principles and characteristics of the spiritual practice called Bhakti which is to have a profound and exemplary degree of devotion for and surrender to the Supreme Being. Narad himself epitomizes Bhakti at its most refined and developed form.

In Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, sage Narad has taught an assembly of sages the grand philosophy as well as the eclectic tenets of Sanyas, the life of total renunciation, detachment and dispassion, leading to one's spiritual liberation and deliverance.

The Atharva Veda's *Hayagriva Upanishad* has been revealed to sage Narad by Brahma the creator when the sage approached the latter with his quest for Brahm-Vidya, the knowledge of Brahm.

In *Garud Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, the creator Brahma has taught Narad the esoteric knowledge known as the 'Garud Vidya' which describes the secret Mantras pertaining to Garud, the divine mount of Lord Vishnu, as well

as the Mantras which can help to counter the evil effects of all types of poisons arising from snake bites.

It was sage Narad who had told Valmiki the story of the Lord Ram which the latter penned down in the form of the epic 'Ramayan' by sage Valmiki.

In Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', Lord Ram had explained to Narad why the Lord had not allowed him to marry in great detail. In essence the Lord told him that once he had taken the vows of renunciation and detachment to lead a life of a wandering hermit or friar, it would have been very wrong to marry. At the same time, the Lord has outlined the characteristic virtues of saints in the same discourse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

⁶Lord Sesh-Nath—Lord Narayan or Vishnu is said to recline on the bedstead of 'Sheshnath', or the legendary serpent of thousand hoods, that floats on the calm waters of the Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean of milk. Now, let us examine their symbolism.

The word 'Shesh' means 'leftover or remainder', and 'Nath' means the Lord. At the time of conclusion of creation, 'something' remains from which the new creation would come into being. It is this 'cosmic entity' into which the previous creation collapses and dissolves at the time of its conclusion. It is from this 'cosmic entity', the 'remainder' of the last creation, that the first signs of the new creation would emerge. Hence, the Seshnath represents the cosmic entity that remains after the creation ends. He is the 'Lord' (Nath) of what remains of this creation. Since Lord Vishnu is the unquestioned 'Lord and the Supreme Being' of this creation who remains even after everything comes to an end, and it is from him that the next phase of creation emerges, he is depicted in the Purans and in iconography as being reclining on the Seshnath. Sheshnath also represents the sum total of all the souls in their subtle forms which have been leftovers from the previous generation or cycle of creation, hibernating and waiting for the opportune time to remerge as a new creation.

It is believed that the world (earth) is supported on the hoods of Sheshnath.

In this context, the Kshirsagar, or the ocean of celestial milk called Amrit upon which this Sheshnath floats, is like the preservative ambrosial fluid which sustains life and gives it nourishment during the time it is in hibernating phase before the commencement of new creation or springing forth of a new generation of living organisms. The Kshirsagar also represents the cosmic primordial gel from which the creation was moulded by the Viraat Purush at the time of creation.

In 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 25 it is narrated that "in the beginning of creation, the Brahm, the Supreme Being represented by the cosmic Consciousness, had employed his Maya (mystical powers that could produce something from nowhere) to create Seshnath, the celestial serpent with a thousand hoods that floated on the surface of the celestial ocean.

According to the epic story of Lord Ram, when Lord Vishnu had manifested himself as Lord Ram, Sheshnath had accompanied the Lord as his younger brother Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197; Lanka Kand, Doha no. 54.]

(48)

हरति सब आरती आरती रामकी ।
 दहन दुख-दोष, निरमूलिनी कामकी ।।1।।
 सुरभ सौरभ धूप दीपबर मालिका ।
 उड़त अघ-बिहँग सुनि ताल करतालिका ।।2।।
 भक्त-हृदि-भवन, अग्यान-तम-हारिनी ।
 बिमल बिग्यानमय तेज-बिस्तारिनी ।।3।।
 मोह-मद-कोह-कलि-कंज-हिमजामिनी ।
 मुक्तिकी दूतिका, देह-दुति दामिनी ।।4।।
 प्रनत-जन-कुमुद-बन-इन्दु-कर-जालिका ।
 तुलसि अभिमान-महिषेस बहु कालिका ।।5।।

(48)

harati saba āratī āratī rāmakī.
 dahana dukha-dōṣa, niramūlinī kāmakī. 1.
 surabha saurabha dhūpa dīpabara mālīkā.
 uṛata agha-bihamṅga suni tāla karatālikā. 2.
 bhakta-hṛdi-bhavana, agyāna-tama-hārinī.
 bimala bigyānamaya tēja-bistārinī. 3.
 mōha-mada-kōha-kali-kañja-himajāminī.
 muktikī dūtīkā, dēha-duti dāminī. 4.
 pranata-jana-kumuda-bana-indu-kara-jālikā.
 tulasi abhimāna-mahiṣēsa bahu kālikā. 5.

Verse no. 48— The ‘Aarti’ of Lord Ram (i.e. the ceremonial formal form of worship of Lord Ram as narrated in verse no. 47) removes all agonies, distresses, sufferings and pains. It burns (i.e. reduces to ashes) all sorrows and miseries, as well as all the sins and evils. It uproots and completely eliminates all sorts of worldly desires, wants, hopes and expectations. (1).

The symbolic garland consists of fragrant incense-sticks and the best of lighted lamps used for such worship (as described in verse no. 47). Hearing the clapping sound made during the Aarti, the birds represented by one’s sins, vices and evil deeds fly off immediately. (2).

The Aarti has the power and potent to illuminate the house of the devotee represented by his heart by destroying the darkness of ignorance and delusions. It spreads the brilliant light of truthful knowledge and wisdom in every direction. (3).

It is like a winter night for the purpose of destroying the lotuses representing Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness), Krodh (anger), and Kali (all the dark evils and vices associated with the world). It is like a lady

messenger of the goddess represented by spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. [In other words, the worship of Lord Ram as narrated in the foregoing verses is a harbinger for one's spiritual liberation and deliverance. It heralds one's emancipation and salvation.] This messenger has a body as radiant and dazzling as lightening. [That is, it is very glorious and powerful. It shines and dazzles by its own illumination representing its stupendous spiritual potentials and divine glories. It is as effective as lightening.] (4).

It is like the moonlight that helps the Kumudini flower (a type of lotus; water lily) representing surrendered devotees to bloom and flourish. It is like the many 'Kalikas' (goddess of destruction and devastation) for the purpose of destroying the demon called Mahisasur representing the pride, ego and vanity of Tulsidas. [Mahisasur was the demon who was killed by goddess Durga.] (5).

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

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